

Message Text

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ACTION ICA-20

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 /032 W
-----080549 221930Z /46

P 221911Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO USICA WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9423

UNCLAS CAIRO 13382

USICA

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: NILE FESTIVAL

1. MICHAEL SISK, PRESIDENT OF "NILE FESTIVAL FOUNDATION"
VISITED EMBASSY MAY 19 AND BRIEFED PAO IN DETAIL ON STATUS
OF FESTIVAL PLANS. ON PREVIOUS VISITS TO CAIRO DURING
PAST THREE YEARS, HE HAS TOLD US ABOUT THIS PROJECT BUT
IT ALWAYS HAD TO BE POSTPONED. THIS TIME HE SAID
DATE OF FIRST FESTIVAL HAS NOW BEEN SET, FOR OCTOBER 15-
28, 1978, IN LUXOR. HE SAYS PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY,
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, A SAN FRANCISCO THEATER GROUP
"ACT" AND OTHER WESTERN PERFORMERS WILL BE IN LUXOR FOR
THE EVENT, AND HE EXPECTS EGYPTIAN CULTURE MINISTRY WILL
FIND EGYPTIAN THEATRICAL, MUSICAL AND OTHER GROUPS TO
REPRESENT TRADITIONAL EGYPTIAN CULTURE THERE. FINANCING,
WHICH DURING PAST THREE YEARS OF PLANNING HAD BEEN A
PROBLEM, IS NOW SOLVED, ACCORDING TO SISK. BASIC COSTS
OF BRINGING WESTERN PERFORMING ARTISTS TO LUXOR WILL BE
COVERED FROM FOLLOWING SOURCES: (A) TWO CHARTER FLIGHT TOUR
GROUPS OF 500 AMERICAN TOURISTS EACH, WHO WILL PAY THE
\$5.00 ADMISSION FEES FOR EACH PERFORMANCE ON TOP OF THEIR
BASIC TOUR COSTS; (B) SMITHSONIAN GRANT, NOT YET FULLY AP-
PROVED BUT PROMISED; (C) ANTICIPATED SUPPORT FROM NATIONAL
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ENDOWMENTS FOR HUMANITIES AND ARTS; AND (D) SUPPORT FROM
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AGENCY.

2. SISK SAYS HE RECEIVED PROMISE OF ICA SUPPORT IN CON-
VERSATION ONE MONTH AGO WITH HAL SCHNEIDMAN, WHO TOLD SISK
ICA WOULD PROVIDE ASSISTANCE OF THREE TYPES: (A) PAY TRANS-
PORTATION AND "OTHER COSTS" FOR PAUL TAYLOR DANCE TROUPE

AND OTHER GROUPS, TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO COME TO EGYPT, (B) BUDGET SUPPORT FOR FESTIVAL, TO BE PROVIDED AFTER FINAL COST ESTIMATES SUBMITTED TO USICA WASHINGTON, AND (C) EGYPTIAN POUND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY USICA CAIRO TO MAINTAIN AN OFFICE IN EGYPT FOR FESTIVAL STAFF, PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM EGYPT FOR THREE FESTIVAL STAFFERS, AND ANY OTHER COSTS WE CAN COVER. SISK SAID HE UNDERSTANDS POST HAS EXCESS EGYPTIAN POUNDS WHICH COULD EASILY BE USED FOR SUCH A PROJECT.

3. PAO EXPLAINED THAT ALL POST FUNDS, INCLUDING EGYPTIAN POUNDS, ARE PART OF REGULAR POST BUDGET WHICH IS ALLOCATED FOR REGULAR POST PROGRAM, AND NO UNPROGRAMMED "EXCESS" EXISTS. PAO TOLD SISK THAT FROM HIS DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT IT UNFORTUNATELY STILL DID NOT SOUND LIKE ONE WHICH USICA CAIRO COULD SUPPORT, BECAUSE PROGRAM WOULD PROBABLY NOT REACH POST'S PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE. ONLY GUARANTEED AUDIENCE WOULD BE THE 1000 AMERICAN TOURISTS BROUGHT IN FOR THE FESTIVAL PLUS THE HUNDREDS OF OTHER AMERICAN AND WESTERN TOURISTS WHO WOULD BE IN LUXOR IN OCTOBER. EGYPTIANS WE ARE TRYING TO REACH ARE UNLIKELY TO BE IN LUXOR THEN, OR TO PAY THE COST OF TRAVEL AND LODGING TO GO THERE FOR FESTIVAL. SISK SAYS HE "HOPES" CULTURE MINISTRY WILL CHARGE LITTLE OR NO ADMISSION FEE FOR EGYPTIANS BECAUSE HE RECOGNIZES THAT \$5 IS WAY ABOVE STANDARD EGYPTIAN ADMISSION CHARGE AND BEYOND EGYPTIAN ABILITY TO PAY. HE ALSO "HOPES" UNCLASSIFIED

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CULTURE MINISTRY WILL PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION FOR EGYPTIAN STUDENTS TO GO TO LUXOR FOR FESTIVAL, AND EXPECTS THEM TO SLEEP IN TENTS THERE TO SOLVE ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM. BUT THESE PLANS ARE VAGUE, AND MINISTRY HAS PROMISED NOTHING EXCEPT TO TRY TO PROVIDE EGYPTIAN PERFORMING ARTISTS FOR FESTIVAL. SISK TOLD PAO THAT MURSI SAAD AL DIN OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION HAD PROMISED L.E. 200,000 WORTH OF SUPPORT FOR PROJECT, BUT MURSI TOLD PAO TODAY THAT THIS OFFER WAS MADE 3 YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS IN DIFFERENT JOB, AND NO LONGER STANDS.

4. PAO EXPLAINED TO SISK THAT WE DO ALL OUR CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS IN CAIRO AND ALEXANDRIA AND EVEN IN THOSE PLACES USICA STAFF MUST MAKE MAJOR EFFORT TO ENSURE LIGHTING AND OTHER FACILITIES WORK PROPERLY, AND TO GET INVITATIONS OUT AND PUBLICIZE EVENTS. SISK EXPECTS CROWDS OF EGYPTIANS WILL FLOCK TO LUXOR FOR FESTIVAL BUT POST BELIEVES THIS UNLIKELY BECAUSE SCARCE TRANSPORTATION AND ACCOMMODATIONS ARE USUALLY MONOPOLIZED BY NON-EGYPTIAN TOURISTS, AND EGYPTIAN CULTURAL AUDIENCE NOT IN HABIT OF SPENDING THE KIND OF MONEY THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND SUCH A FESTIVAL.

5. REQUEST AGENCY ADVISE POST WHAT USICA SUPPORT, IF ANY,
IS PLANNED FOR NILE FESTIVAL. HAVE ADVISED SISK THAT ANY
USICA SUPPORT WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM WASHINGTON BUDGET.
SINCE SISK SOMEWHAT VAGUE ABOUT EXACT NATURE OF SUPPORT,
POST WOULD BE GLAD TO PASS THIS INFORMATION ON TO HIM IF WE
RECEIVE WORD BEFORE FRIDAY MAY 26 WHEN HE PLANS TO LEAVE
CAIRO. RUGH

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